

CITY COUNCIL

Pedro "Pete" M. Sanchez, Mayor
Jane Day, Mayor Pro-Tem
Sam Derting
Michael J. Hudson
Michael A. Segala



CITY COUNCIL MEETING

First and Third Tuesday
Every Month

CITY OF SUISUN CITY

701 Civic Center Blvd.
Suisun City, California 94585

Incorporated October 9, 1868

July 1, 2008

To the Honorable Ramona Garrett, Presiding Judge of the Superior Court

Re: 2007-2008 Grand Jury Report Entitled: City of Suisun City Police Department
Report Date: June 25, 2008

Dear Honorable Judge Garrett:

We received the FY 2007-08 Grand Jury's report on our Police Department operations yesterday. We appreciate the exhaustive time that went into this report especially because the citizens serving on the Grand Jury virtually volunteer their time to this undertaking. We likewise recognize that this body has numerous other issues, agencies and organizations to examine during its year-long term in an attempt to understand a full array of operating nuances and data - all in a relatively short period of time. It is a daunting task.

Pursuant to Penal Code Section 933.05, agencies such as Suisun City have 60 days to prepare and submit a formal response to the Grand Jury's findings and recommendations, which this is not. However, because the Grand Jury's findings and recommendations are routinely made public well before the public agency's response that clarifies or, in many instances, negates an allegation entirely is made public, the City feels it is in the best interest of our residents to receive a clarification of some of the more disconcerting observations raised. This is even more pressing given the important role our Police Department plays in the health and welfare of our community.

As this is not intended to be our formal response, which will be forthcoming, the areas we feel need clarification at this time include:

1. Training
2. Staffing and organization
3. Morale tied to issues of compensation, change.

These issues reflect on the ability of the men and women of our Police Department to effectively serve our community - a service from these individuals that we greatly value.

DEPARTMENTS: AREA CODE (707)

ADMINISTRATION 421-7300 ■ PLANNING 421-7335 ■ BUILDING 421-7310 ■ FINANCE 421-7320
FIRE 425-9133 ■ RECREATION & COMMUNITY SERVICES 421-7200 ■ POLICE 421-7373 ■ PUBLIC WORKS 421-7340
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TRAINING – As noted in the Grand Jury's report, credit was given and mention was made of Chief Ed Dadisho's efforts to organize multi-agency training sessions that not only benefit our Police Department, but the region as a whole. However, this type of effort does not diminish the priority we place on meeting the broader training needs of our staff per the requirements of POST (Peace Officer Standards and Training). The finding made in the Grand Jury report that "several areas of training mandated by the Peace Officer Standards and Training Commission are deficient" is inconsistent with a letter, from POST, dated March 19, 2008, stating that a compliance audit of in-service training records was conducted on February 11, 2008, and "no significant deficiencies were found." This letter was submitted to the Grand Jury when it was received.

STAFFING AND ORGANIZATION – Police departments throughout the State of California are having challenges recruiting and retaining both sworn and support positions (i.e., dispatchers). This challenge is exacerbated for smaller agencies. However, implications that the Department has an ineffective command structure or that certain individuals carry a heavier load than others needs some clarification.

In 2005, an organization and staffing study of the Police Department was undertaken by an outside consulting firm to support policy-making regarding whether to continue contracting with the Sheriff's department for graveyard coverage or to bring these services back in house. The Police Department staffing and organization plan in place today reflects those recommendations of that consulting firm. Organizational levels and staffing will vary from community to community; there is no "cookie cutter" organizational plan out there, nor should there be. Police department staffing and organizational structure need to be tied to calls for service in a community and the policy directives of the locally elected body.

While we do not have the rank of Police Lieutenant, we do have Master Police Sergeant, and Master Police Officer and Senior Police Officer assignments, which are one of our efforts to provide training and career development opportunities and recognition that might not be found in another, larger organization.

To further support personal training and career development, we have designed a variety of ancillary assignments. At the time of the Grand Jury's assessment, these assignments included:

- **Sgt. Pitts:** Night watch patrol; Traffic enforcement
- **Sgt. Szmaurlo:** Day watch patrol; Field training coordinator; Boat enforcement; Maintenance; Police vehicle and equipment coordinator; Incident commander at the July 4th event
- **Sgt. Stec:** Day watch patrol; Detectives unit supervisor; Interim support services manager
- **Sgt. Marshall:** Night watch patrol; Special operations supervisor (K9, Crime/gang suppression unit)
- **Interim Commander Heitz:** Overall departmental operational duties (not a sergeant, and as noted in the Grand Jury report, this position was permanently filled in May by Police Commander Tim Mattos).

By creating these various assignments, we support the personal growth and career development of our staff, even if by so doing, we make them more attractive to other agencies as they further their careers.

MORALE AND COMPENSATION AND ISSUES OF CHANGE

One area that the Grand Jury's report touches upon, which is applicable to all types of organizations, is the need for effective communications between and across all levels of the organization. This is especially important for a 24/7 operation where line staff might not ever work at the same time as their formal supervisors and bosses.

Efforts that have been made to enhance communications include the institution of both a departmental level and citywide intranet site (the former has been in operation for years as an integral part of department operations and the latter is just unfolding). Supporting this tool, Chief Dadisho recently instituted a "discussion board" where Department employees can discuss and raise issues in a safe environment where posts are anonymous, unless the author chooses to share his or her name.

Since he was appointed, Chief Dadisho has maintained an "open door policy," as well as formal monthly meetings with Department supervisors with the intent that information will funnel below to officers and staff members. Further, Chief Dadisho makes himself available for monthly meetings with the Police Officers Association, sessions that have become better utilized in the past three to four months. As communications can always be improved, other opportunities will be explored based on the Grand Jury's observations.

It is likewise true that, as stated in the report, Suisun City's salaries are significantly behind the market, an issue that applies not only to the Police Department, but throughout the organization. This is an issue that the City Council is working toward alleviating in a fiscally responsible manner.

The observations made in the Grand Jury's report regarding the need for commercial development and sales tax generation to provide the monies necessary to address salary and compensation matters is appreciated; it's a linkage that not everyone understands.

At the same time, it is worth noting that the City recently negotiated three-year MOU's with both Police and Miscellaneous employees – negotiations that have not caused the type of turmoil noted in some of our neighboring jurisdictions. By the end of these contracts, it is hoped and anticipated that two-thirds of our classifications will be within 5% of our policy objective of having salaries that are at 90% of our defined local market.

It is true that a lot of change has occurred in the last few years as a result of a new energy, a belief of what we can become and a vision for the future. We have a great team of men and women in our Police Department – a team that has had to work with some critical positions vacant. We are moving forward, there is light at the end of the tunnel and, hopefully, those committed to our City see it and feel it.

One exciting side note: A former Police Department employee --who left to explore new opportunities elsewhere -- recently requested to rejoin the Suisun City P.D.

As indicated earlier, this is not our formal response to the Grand Jury's recent report on our Police Department, but rather some critical points that were important to share publicly earlier rather than later. Clarifications of such matters as traffic collisions (which we show as significantly fewer than your records), and use of certain pieces of equipment (both department-owned and donated by outside vendors), will be made in our formal response to the Grand Jury's report on City of Suisun City Police Department dated June 25, 2008.

Thank you for your time and considering these observations.

Sincerely,



Suzanne Bragdon
City Manager



Ed Dadisho
Police Chief

Cc: Suisun City Council
Daily Republic
Vacaville Reporter